

Keeping an eye on hurri-cane season

By Meghan Sapp

There's still another seven weeks left of hurricane season but the damage this year has already been considerable.

The media is hurricane-d out this year, already bored with anything that isn't a category 5 flattening entire islands as has been the case recently with two hugely destructive hurricanes within a week of each other. But that doesn't mean the season is over or that the risk of further damage has receded.

Tropical Storm Nate is headed for the coast of Honduras and Belize where the National Hurricane Centre of the [US's National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration expects it to touch land before heading towards the Gulf of Mexico](#), building up to hurricane strength and likely hitting the Louisiana cane region. Thankfully for Florida's sugar industry, who this week announced that [damage from Hurricane Maria totaled US\\$383 million](#), isn't likely to see much more from Nate than a lot of wind and rain.

If Nate doesn't get too strong and if it doesn't curl even more eastward once it reaches the Gulf of Mexico, that is. Now there's a [low pressure area in the Eastern Atlantic forming](#) that the NHC says has a 30% chance of developing into a tropical storm within the next five days, just another reminder that hurricane season is still around for another seven weeks or so until the end of November,

though the peak period typically ends around the end of September.

Cuba's industry was hit hard by Hurricane Irma in early September with [338,000ha of cane flattened and another 92,000ha inundated](#), accounting for about half of its crop. With the crush set to start in November, it's all but certain that the industry's hopes of its long-awaited recovery is still some time away.

[Florida's industry will have to hand cut seed cane](#) as the canes are too weak after Hurricane Maria for machine harvesting, while production costs are expected to double next year. This year's crush that began October 1 might not see much impact from hurricane damage, however. Louisiana and Texas' industries missed out on much of the damage from Hurricane Harvey that devastated Houston but Nate may make a showing in the next 10 days or so to remind Louisiana's industry to stay on point.

Sadly for the Caribbean sugar industry, there is little that can be done to protect the crop and avoid damage from a hurricane. When it wants to come, it wants to come and you can either batten down the hatches or run. For the global sugar market, wiping out tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of tonnes of production is always good for a bear run in a surplus market, which is about all the silver lining one can get out of such devastation.